



Living Healthy,  
Working Well

# Wellness Tips

## Managing Money in a Relationship

Even if you are in relatively good financial shape, how money is handled can be a touchy subject in a relationship. But when expenses exceed income, the difficulty of meeting (or not meeting) financial obligations creates a high level of stress and tension for all involved. Developing a financial strategy is key to maintaining a healthy relationship. Through communication and planning, you can spend, save, and develop a strong and balanced financial future together.

### ***Set financial goals together***

Decide what you want to accomplish within a certain time frame. Review your mutual goals on a regular basis and adapt them if necessary to reflect any changes in your circumstances.

### ***Yours, mine and ours – joint accounts***

Most people need to have money they can call their own, even if it's just to surprise their partner with a gift. You might consider creating a joint account for groceries and rent, and a joint savings account, but allow each person to have a separate account for individual spending money.

### ***Develop a realistic budget***

Regardless of how your accounts are arranged, you should develop a budget to regulate spending. Once a budget is established, work together to determine whose paycheck will cover specific costs. Also, predetermine how any money left over after paying bills will be used.

### ***Set up an automatic savings plan***

Think of all the cash you and your partner spend without thinking. Could you spare \$10 a week? That would add up to \$520 a year. How about \$25 a week? That would blossom to \$1,300 in a year, not including interest!

### ***Organize financial records***

Keep track of statements, check stubs, and receipts. These are important for taxes, checking for credit card or billing errors, and monitoring spending.

### ***Use credit sensibly***

First, try to pay for purchases with cash or checks. Only purchase items on credit that will outlast the payments on them, for example, a refrigerator or washing machine. Using credit for everyday items such as groceries is not cost-effective, nor is buying items you don't need. If you must use credit, shop around to find low interest rates and annual fees. Pay cards off immediately or use them only for emergencies. Close credit accounts that you use infrequently, especially if they charge annual fees or have a high interest rate.

### ***Determine your debt limit***

A safe debt load, excluding rent or mortgage, is generally no more than 20 percent of your monthly take-home pay.

### ***Get advice from the experts***

Financial planning can be confusing. Don't be shy about getting professional help from an accountant or financial planner if you need help managing your money. If you are concerned about your debt, free consumer credit counseling services are available in many communities.

### **Call Your EAP**

If you or someone you care about needs help locating financial guidance resources, you may wish to contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP counselors are available 24 hours a day, every day of the week, to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you. Information, self-help tools, and other resources are also available online at [www.MagellanAssist.com](http://www.MagellanAssist.com).

#### *Resources:*

Consumer Credit Counseling Service.

Karin Price Mueller, *Online Money Management*, Microsoft Press, 2001.

Adrien G. Berg, *How to Stop Fighting About Money and Make Some: A Couple's Guide to Personal Harmony & Financial Success*, Newmarket Press.

HealthyLife® *Mental Fitness Guide*. ©1996, American Institute for Preventive Medicine, Farmington Hills, MI.

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